



Royal Archaeological Institute / Roman Society Colloquium



The Romans in North-East England

29 November to 1 December 2019

Chancellor's Hall, Senate House, Malet Street,
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Registered Charity Number 226222

Friday, 29 November 2019

- 18.00-18.30 Registration
- 18.30-19.30 Introduction: The Romans In North-East England (Martin Millett)
- 19.30-20.00 Discussion

Saturday, 30 November 2019

- 9.30-10.00 Late registration/coffee
- 10.00-11.00 Aldborough (Rose Ferraby and Martin Millett)
- 11.00-12.00 Recent Work at Roman Corbridge (Ian Haynes, Alex Turner, Jon Allison, Frances McIntosh, Graeme Stobbs, Doug Carr and Lesley Davidson)
- 12.00-13.30 LUNCH
- 13.30-14.30 Scotch Corner (Dave Fell)
- 14.30-15.00 A684 Bedale Bypass: The excavation of a Late Iron Age/Early Roman Enclosure and a late Roman villa (James Gerrard)
- 15.00-15.30 COFFEE
- 15.30-16.30 Dere Street: York to Corbridge – a numismatic perspective (Richard Brickstock)
- 16.30-17.30 Panel Discussion (Lindsay Allason-Jones, Colin Haselgrove, Nick Hodgson and Pete Wilson)
- 17.30-19.00 RECEPTION

Sunday, 1 December 2019

- 9.30-10.30 Bridge over troubled water? Ritual or rubbish at Roman Piercebridge (Hella Eckardt and Philippa Walton)
- 10.30-11.00 *Cataractonium*: Establishment, Consolidation and Retreat (Stuart Ross)
- 11.00-11.30 COFFEE

- 11.30-12.00 New light on Roman Binchester: Excavations 2009-17 (David Petts – to be read by Pete Wilson)
- 12.00-12.30 *Petuaria* Revisited - recent discoveries at Brough on Humber and vicinity (Peter Halkon)
- 12.30-13.00 Life, Death and Rubbish Disposal in Roman Norton: Excavations at Brooklyn House, Norton upon Derwent 2015-16 (John Buglass and Janet Phillips)
- 13.00-13.30 Closing Discussion (Chair: Ian Haynes)

FRIDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2019

Introduction: the Romans in North-East England

Martin Millett, University of Cambridge

In the last decade or so there has been a considerable amount of new and significant archaeological fieldwork focused on the North-East of England and a number of past projects have also been brought to completion. Traditionally, the study of this area has taken something of a back seat with those interested in the frontier focusing on Hadrian's Wall whilst those whose interests lay in the civil province mostly worked further south. Happily, much good research has now been re-centred on this key region where we can learn much about Roman imperialism. This paper will introduce the weekend, placing the sites to be discussed in a broader historical framework, and suggesting some new ways in which both the history of the Roman Conquest and the modes of subsequent imperial exploitation might be rethought.

SATURDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2019

Recent work at Aldborough: the *civitas* capital of the Brigantes

Rose Ferraby and Martin Millett, University of Cambridge

Since 2009 we have been running a project that has been re-evaluating the archaeology of Aldborough. Combining large-scale geophysical survey with a thorough re-evaluation of all past work and some small-scale re-examination of previously excavated sites, we have just completed a new synthesis of the site. In the first half of this paper we will discuss some of the highlights of this work, illustrating how our re-evaluation provides important new evidence about this town, which acted as the civil administrative centre for much of northern Britain. In the second half, we will briefly review how this work allows us to present a new historical synthesis of the town, altering some aspects of our understanding of Roman Britain.

Recent Work at Roman Corbridge

Ian Haynes, Alex Turner, Jon Allison, Francis McIntosh, Graeme Stobbs, Doug Carr and Lesley Davidson, Newcastle University and English Heritage

The Corbridge Roman Station and Environs Project marks the first attempt to undertake a comprehensive geophysical survey of the Roman landscape of Corbridge. Magnetometry survey has now covered the entire area of the Scheduled Monument, spanning from west of the Red House Farm site eastwards to the fringes of the modern village of Corbridge. Concentrated ground penetrating radar survey using the MALA MIRA has also provided important information of the area around the English Heritage curated site at its heart. The Project has worked in close association with other initiatives, the Iappetus-funded PhD research of Lesley Davidson 'Assessing and predicting natural environmental impacts on cultural heritage landscapes: a case study on Hadrian's Wall', which has produced a LiDAR survey of the area, and an exploratory excavation by Sam Turner and Rob Collins' WallCap lottery-funded community archaeology initiative. This paper will offer an update of project work and the intersections between these work programmes, while also noting two important studies which are doing much to make archival data from the site more readily available to scholars. The English Heritage research programme at Corbridge led by Frances McIntosh and Doug Carr's new PhD on coins from Hadrian's Wall both have important contributions to make to our understanding of the settlement in its broader context.

Contact, Concord and Conquest: Britons and Romans at Scotch Corner

Dave Fell, Northern Archaeological Associates

At Scotch Corner, the A1 scheme exposed large transects through part of a British Late Iron Age centre. In conjunction with the nearby metalworking and hoard site at Melsonby and adjacent native royal centre of Stanwick, the poly-focal complex was inundated with exotic imports from the Roman world during the 1st-century AD, apparently signifying the expansion of Roman markets and rewards associated with a client arrangement between the Brigantian elite and Rome. By AD70, however, civil strife triggered Roman conquest and rapid construction of the Roman road network. Previously unoccupied areas around the junction were developed in the configuration of a proto-small town and perhaps occupied by a Roman contingent and displaced natives. Once the northern frontier was secured, the inhabitants apparently dispersed to other settlements and nearby *vici*; Scotch Corner's lifespan may have been brief, but it occupied a pivotal location during this tumultuous era of first Roman contact and conquest.

A684 Bedale Bypass: The excavation of a Late Iron Age / Early Roman Enclosure and a late Roman villa

Dr James Gerrard, Newcastle University

Excavations by Pre-Construct Archaeology and Prospect Archaeology ahead of the construction of the A684 Bedale Bypass investigated two major sites. The first, a substantial enclosure, revealed evidence of metal-working, feasting and funerary activity at the end of the Iron Age. There were also tantalising hints of connections with the Roman army during the late first and early second centuries AD.

The excavations also investigated part of a late Roman villa. This structure was associated with a fascinating group of finds deposited in the top of a quarry pit that probably dates to the middle of the third century.

This paper presents the results of these excavations and attempts to place them in a broader interpretative context.

Dere Street: York to Corbridge – a numismatic perspective

Richard Brickstock, Independent Consultant

This paper aims to assess the current state of numismatic knowledge of the forts and settlements adjacent to Dere Street, ranging from York and Castleford in the south to Corbridge in the north. It aims to address questions such as the chronological progression of the Roman advance; the economic development of the settlements and adjacent communities; and the extent to which those communities were dominated by the presence or absence of the military.

It draws upon data relating to the major sites of York, Aldborough, Catterick, Piercebridge, Binchester, Corbridge and elsewhere, much of it compiled by the author in the course of some four decades of numismatic research; and it also takes into account the large quantity of data provided by recent investigations along the line of the A1(M)/Dere Street relating to Healam Bridge, Catterick and Baines as well as the newly-discovered settlement at Scotch Corner.

SUNDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2019

Bridge over troubled water? Ritual or rubbish at Roman Piercebridge

Hella Eckardt and Philippa Walton

In recent years, Roman objects have frequently been discovered close to bridges and river crossings. For example, thousands of coins have been retrieved from the River Liri at Minturnae (Italy), the Mosel at Trier (Germany) and the Thames in London (UK). Despite hints in Classical sources that Roman bridges had symbolic, religious and ritual meaning, these Roman assemblages have usually been assumed to be accidental losses or rubbish deposits revealed by riverine erosion.

Our Leverhulme-funded project (which will be completed in August 2020) is challenging this assumption by systematically investigating the significance of the numerous assemblages of Roman objects found at bridges and river crossings throughout the Roman Empire. By looking at both the types of objects found and their exact contexts, we are trying to ascertain whether they were ritual in nature or rubbish. We are also actively engaging with theoretical approaches developed to explore watery assemblages deposited before and after the Roman period. Our major case study is an assemblage of Roman objects found on the bed of the River Tees at Piercebridge, County Durham. Recovered by two divers between the 1980s and the present day, the assemblage comprises more than 3,000 objects mostly dating to the second and third centuries AD, as well as 40kg of Roman pottery and 10kg of animal bone. Detailed analysis of these objects and their context has provided some fascinating insights into why they were deposited and the identities of those responsible for their deposition, while also contributing to our understanding of the development of Roman Piercebridge.

***Cataractonium*: Establishment, Consolidation and Retreat**

Stuart Ross, Northern Archaeological Associates

The widening of the A1 through North Yorkshire has allowed investigation of the well-preserved and deeply stratified remains of the Roman town of *Cataractonium*. The ongoing analysis is augmenting the results of previous work, whilst providing new insights into the chronological development, function and character of the settlement from its establishment as a fort and military *vicus* during the late 1st century AD, through periods of consolidation and the development of a town during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, to the final withdrawal of the army and abandonment of the Roman provinces of Britannia during the early 5th century AD. The work has also demonstrated that *Cataractonium* continued to support a community beyond the end of Roman rule and into the 6th century AD.

New light on Roman Binchester: Excavations 2009-17

David Petts (to be read by Pete Wilson)

A series of excavations carried out by Durham University and Durham County Council on the fort, vicus and cemetery at Binchester (*Vinovia*) (Co. Durham) has shed new light on the development of this key site which lies on Dere Street. Excavation within the fort itself have a typical cavalry barrack block with evidence for several phases of reworking and reconstruction. The sequence is particularly interesting for what it can tell us about the final phases of activity at the site, with suggestions of use well into the 5th century. Work on the *vicus* area recovered a particularly well-preserved bath-house, which seems to have gone out of use in the mid/late 4th century before being used for large-scale refuse disposal in the final years of Roman activity at the site. Although the acid soil conditions meant that the preservation of human bone within the cemetery was very poor, excavation revealed a series of late Roman burials which shed some light on the inhabitants of the fort and its surrounding settlement.

***Petuaria* Revisited - recent discoveries at Brough on Humber and vicinity**

Peter Halkon, University of Hull

Roman Brough on Humber has been recognised since the 17th century, however, by comparison with other sites of its type, it has received relatively little attention. The main phases of archaeological exploration were undertaken by Philip Corder in the 1930, who excavated an impressive defensive circuit and a number of stone buildings on the Burrs Playing Field. The most important find was an inscription dedicating a new proscenium by aedile M. Ulpius Januarius. Corder was followed by John Wachter, whose *Excavations at Brough on Humber* (1969) is still the only sizeable monograph on this topic. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the East Riding Archaeological Society undertook work there under the leadership of Peter Armstrong. Pre-development excavation by the Humber Field Archaeology and the York Archaeological Trust revealed further evidence in the late 1980s and 1990s. The main focus of this contribution will be the interim results from *Petuaria Revisited*, an ongoing community project organised through the Elloughton cum Brough Playing Fields Association, with support from the Town Council and various local businesses, which is producing impressive results. In 2014, magnetometer surveys in the Burrs playing field at the centre of the present town, revealed much more activity than hitherto suspected in the form of large buildings and roads. GPR surveys by David Staveley in 2018 and 2019, however, provided much more detail, including an organised road system, large stone buildings along the roads, and a large D-shaped structure, possibly a theatre or a council chamber containing tiered seating, perhaps the structure referred to in the famous inscription itself. The various interpretations as to the status and character of Roman Brough will be discussed and its relationship to a nearby multiperiod site close by.

Life, Death and Rubbish Disposal In Roman Norton: Excavations at Brooklyn House, Norton upon Derwent 2015-16

John Buglass and Janet Phillips, JB Archaeology Ltd

Six years of investigation into the site of a new school recorded significant 2nd–5th century remains. These remains showed the ebb and flow of the development of the southern side of the settlement from an agricultural landscape to an edge of town cemetery. This was then supplanted by several substantial stone buildings focused on the adjacent road. The size of the buildings shows that the settlement was prosperous and expanding steadily into the 3rd and 4th centuries.

There followed a period of ‘decline and fall’ with the area south of the buildings becoming the town rubbish dump with refuse being discarded across the now unused fields. The rubbish dumping also spread into the now abandoned and salvaged buildings in the later 4th/early 5th centuries and it is this later activity that gives the site another of its unusual aspects. Initial pottery analysis results seem to show a significant 5th century component which has implications on how the end of empire affected this part of North Yorkshire.